"Deterrence: States Without the Death Penalty Have Had Consistently Lower Murder Rates." *Death Penalty Information Center*. The Death Penalty Information Center, 11 Mar. 2011. Web. 16 Jan. 2012

**Deterrence: States Without the Death Penalty Have Had Consistently Lower Murder Rates**

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(click on year to see the murder rates and calculations involved in this analysis, provided by David Cooper)  
\* Includes Kansas and New York in the years after they adopted the death penalty, 1994 and 1995 respectively. New Jersey and New York ended the death penalty in the latter part of 2007 and will not be counted as death penalty states in 2008.

**Notes:**

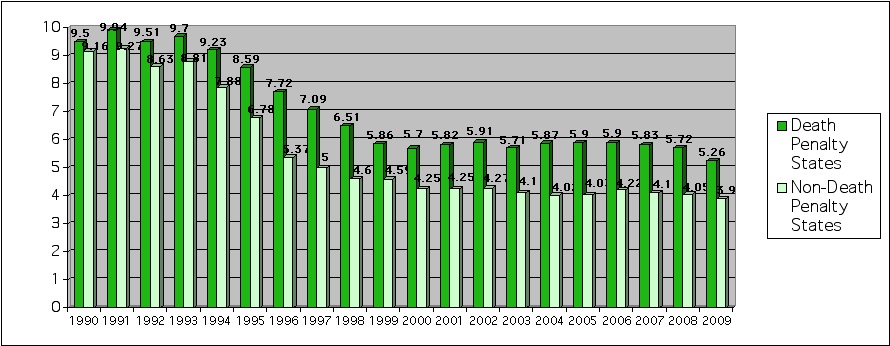
*Populations are from the U.S. Census estimates for each year.*

*Murder rates are from the FBI's "Crime in the United States" and are per 100,000 population.*

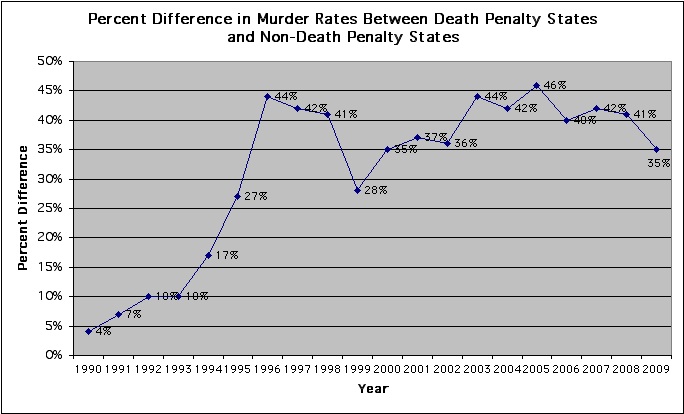
*The murder rate for the region (death penalty states or non-death penalty states) is the total number of murders in the region divided by the total population (and then multiplied by 100,000)*

*In calculations that include Kansas and New York, Kansas is counted as a death penalty state from 1994 and New York from 1996, since New York's law did not become effective until September, 1995.*

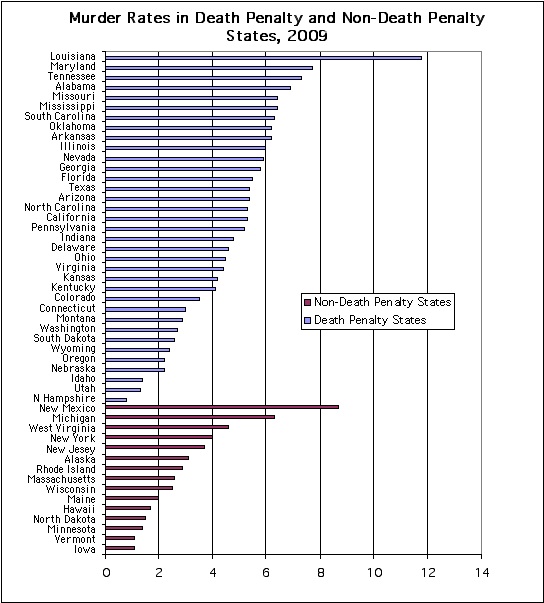
**Murder Rates in Death Penalty States and Non-Death Penalty States**



The murder rate in non-death penalty states has remained consistently lower than the rate in states with the death penalty, and the gap has grown since 1990.

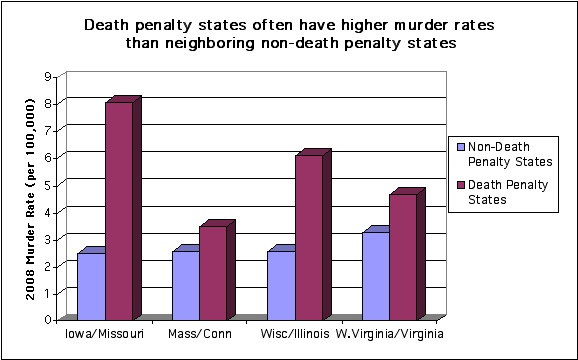


**STUDIES COMPARING STATES WITH THE DEATH PENALTY AND STATES WITHOUT**

**Michigan Lawmakers Reaffirm State's Longstanding Ban on Capital Punishment -** In a vote upholding the state's longstanding abolition of the death penalty, Michigan lawmakers refused to support a measure that would have put capital punishment before state voters in a referendum. The vote fell 18 short of the 2/3 required for passage. During a lengthy House debate regarding the bill, Representative Jack Minor (D-Flint) told his colleagues that studies show crime rates are lower in states without the death penalty. He noted, "The death penalty's not a deterrent. In fact, the figures would suggest it's just the opposite." Other opponents of the measure stated that "revenge" would not help victims' families. Michigan has not had the death penalty for 158 years, and voters have not addressed the issue since its abolition was included in the 1963 revision of the state constitution. Michigan is one of 12 states in the U.S. that does not have a death penalty. (Michigan Live, March 19, 2004) The state was the first English speaking government in the world to ban the practice.

**States Without the Death Penalty Have Better Record on Homicide Rates** - A new survey by the New York Times found that states without the death penalty have lower homicide rates than states with the death penalty. The Times reports that ten of the twelve states without the death penalty have homicide rates below the national average, whereas half of the states with the death penalty have homicide rates above. During the last 20 years, the homicide rate in states with the death penalty has been 48% - 101% higher than in states without the death penalty. "I think Michigan made a wise decision 150 years ago," said the state's governor, John Engler, a Republican, referring to the state's abolition of the death penalty in 1846. "We're pretty proud of the fact that we don't have the death penalty." (New York Times, 9/22/00)

**States Without the Death Penalty Fared Better Over Past Decade** - In the past ten years, the number of executions in the U.S. has increased while the murder rate has declined. Some commentators have maintained that the murder rate has dropped because of the increase in executions (see, e.g., W. Tucker, "Yes, the Death Penalty Deters," Wall St. Journal, June 21, 2002). However, during this decade the murder rate in non-death penalty states has remained consistently lower than the rate in states with the death penalty.

When comparisons are made between states with the death penalty and states without, the majority of death penalty states show murder rates higher than non-death penalty states. The average of murder rates per 100,000 population in 1999 among death penalty states was 5.5, whereas the average of murder rates among non-death penalty states was only 3.6.

A look at neighboring death penalty and non-death penalty states show similar trends. Death penalty states usually have a higher murder rate than their neighboring non-death penalty states.